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COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 386th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 14 June 1993, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria)

- Report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the work of its thirtieth session (continued)
- Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (continued)
- Other matters
- Report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the work of its thirtieth session (continued)
- Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

REPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WORK OF ITS THIRTIETH SESSION (A/AC.105/543) (continued)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued)

Mr. HALFF (Netherlands): With regard to the report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, I should like to say a few words on the questions of space debris and of whether we should have a third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 3) in the near future.

With regard to the problem of space debris, the Netherlands is of the opinion that we are talking here of a serious situation evolving in space, but not, as yet, of an irreversible situation. However, steps to address and redress the problem are necessary to prevent the situation from actually becoming insoluble. In that context, we applaud the measures already taken by the spacefaring nations to reduce further pollution in space. But more could and should be done.

This, however, does not mean that we should immediately rush into drafting rules and regulations to curb pollution in outer space by debris. We can do this only after a thorough and scientifically based evaluation of the problem has taken place. We therefore support the suggestion already made by other delegations: that, as a first step, the problem of space debris should be put on the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. Only after the Subcommittee has studied and evaluated the problem will we be in a position to proceed, if necessary, to the next phase: the phase of drafting comprehensive rules and regulations as an end result of our efforts here.

During the general debate it was suggested that a third UNISPACE conference should be organized in the near future. My delegation is not yet

(Mr. Halff, Netherlands)

convinced that there is a real need for a third such conference. In our opinion, further evaluation of the results of the second UNISPACE conference, and further implementation of the recommendations of that conference are called for. Before we start considering the possibility of a third conference, we should first have fully digested the results of UNISPACE 82.

Mr. MOUTSOULAS (Greece): As this is the first time my delegation has spoken at this session, I wish to extend to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on the outstanding way in which you are discharging your duties.

It has been generally recognized that at its thirtieth session the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee indeed carried out valuable work and achieved substantial progress on the matters on its agenda. I wish to report to the Committee that the United Nations Workshop on Space Communications for Development for the benefit of Member States of the Mediterranean and adjacent areas, which is mentioned in the Subcommittee's report, took place in Athens on 10 to 12 May 1993. As members know, the Workshop was convened, first, to address technical and operational issues associated with various international and regional satellite systems and services; secondly, to focus on the status and projected directions of this technology, with particular emphasis on such issues as current and future developments of the technology, including mobile satellite communications, domestic satellite communication services and applications, regional telecommunication services and satellite communications as a tool for economic development, particularly in telemedicine and tele-education; and thirdly, to provide an opportunity for communications specialists from the Mediterranean region and adjacent areas to exchange information on their activities in this field and to discuss possibilities for increasing regional and international cooperation.

(Mr. Moutsoulas, Greece)

The Workshop was attended by 47 participants from 21 countries, and concluded its deliberations with specific observations in the following areas: tele-education, personal communication and regional cooperation.

It has been a pleasure, indeed, to cooperate with the Office for Outer Space Affairs. We are thankful to Mr. Jasentuliyana and Mr. Abiodun for their advice and assistance.

The Workshop took place at the Eugenides Foundation, a foundation devoted to the promotion of modern technology in Greece, and was followed by a seminar on International Maritime Satellite Organization (INMARSAT) terminals. A meeting of the users of the services of the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) will also take place from 14 and 17 September this year at the Eugenides Foundation.

Moreover, a workshop on forest fire risk assessment will be organized from 18 to 21 November 1993. Any delegation wishing information about those events should contact the Greek delegation.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to take this opportunity to urge representatives who place their names on the list of speakers for a given meeting, please to make every effort to be in the Chamber promptly for that meeting.

OTHER MATTERS

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee will now hear a presentation on the Global Engineering Project for Sustainable Use of Earth, by the President of the International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS).

Mr. Murai (International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS)) made a presentation to the Committee.

REPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WORK OF ITS THIRTIETH SESSION (A/AC.105/543) (continued)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued)

Mr. RAO (India): Outer space is now universally recognized and cherished as the common heritage of humankind. The spectacular developments in space technology and its large-scale application in the areas of communications, television broadcasting, long-distance education, emergency communications, disaster warning and optimal management of natural resources have already had a major impact by improving the quality of life and initiating a rapid process of development. The preservation of space as our common heritage and assisting even the least developed societies to benefit fully from developments in space must necessarily become our foremost collective responsibility.

While the phenomenal progress achieved in the past three decades has demonstrated beyond any doubt the relevance and impact of space applications for the betterment of humanity, it has also made us aware of our great responsibility to guide the course of future developments wisely. Equally challenging is the immediate task of disseminating the benefits from space technology to the vast majority of the countries that are in need of rapid development.

The two United Nations Conferences on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE) that were held in the past provided the international community with an opportunity to review the status of developments, to accelerate the peaceful application of space technology and to create the necessary atmosphere for increased international cooperation. The significant developments achieved since the last UNISPACE Conference, in Vienna in 1982 - more than a decade ago - while demonstrating the unlimited

(Mr. Rao, India)

potential of space technology for achieving rapid development have unmistakably revealed the importance of sustained space observations on a global scale for ensuring the continued survival of a habitat for humankind on this planet. The remarkable achievements of the past few years have thus become both a proof and a prophecy of what space can do.

Space observations have dramatically brought out the need for severe control over the anthropogenic manipulation that has led to large-scale deforestation, particularly in the tropical belt; expanding desertification; mismanagement of precious land and water resources; and the uncontrolled increase in greenhouse gases, which will surely initiate environmental changes on this planet affecting all human and other life. Reversal of this trend demands vigorous follow-up actions and global cooperation, in which space technology must play a vital role. It will require consolidating the initial momentum provided by the various International Space Year (ISY) activities on the theme of "Mission to Planet Earth" and following them up with greater international cooperation and the participation of all countries, including all the developing nations.

It is here pertinent to recall the recommendations of the recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development relating to the framework for a coordinated international effort to implement new, sustainable development policies to safeguard the basic heritage of humankind and the quality of Earth's environment for future generations. Now is the time, particularly with the encouraging and dramatic changes that have taken place in the global geopolitical scene, for the world space community to address, collectively, the specific steps that need to be initiated to achieve this goal.

(Mr. Rao, India)

Despite the demonstrated capability of space - in revolutionizing the communications infrastructure; eradicating illiteracy; meteorological forecasting; optimal management of land and water resources for initiating integrated, sustainable development strategies at the microeconomic level; and ensuring food security for all - as our own deliberations in our Committee and Subcommittees indicate, the desires and aspirations of many developing countries have remained dreams for lack of responsible appreciation, technological competence and an adequate resource bank. The yawning gap between the urgent needs and the available resources of developing nations can be solved only through greater understanding by the world community and the implementation of practical cooperation strategies at the international and regional levels.

It is in this context that our delegation strongly supports holding the third UNISPACE Conference, preferably in a developing country. It is very gratifying to recall that our Committee, during the last session, recommended to the Member States that the possibility of holding the third UNISPACE Conference should be discussed at an appropriate time; this recommendation was subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly, in paragraph 20 of resolution 47/67. Further, the members of our Committee are also aware of the recommendation of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirtieth session, that the Committee should address the question of holding such a Conference at this session, under its agenda item entitled "Other matters", and discuss the objectives, goals, organizational aspects, venue, timing and funding implications of holding such a Conference. The Working Group of the Whole also noted the proposal for holding the third UNISPACE Conference in a developing country, preferably in 1995.

(Mr. Rao, India)

We are very happy to note that the members of the Committee have voiced strong support for holding a third UNISPACE Conference. Such an overwhelming expression of support from the delegations can come only from a common belief that there is a desperate need to translate the potential benefits from space into reality, and a strong collective will to revitalize international cooperation to achieve this goal. Given this favourable climate, we clearly must address the questions of the need for such a Conference and what its goals should be.

(Mr. Rao, India)

Since the holding of UNISPACE 82, the practical utilization of space remote sensing for the management of valuable natural resources has assumed paramount significance, particularly for developing nations whose agricultural productivity is unable to meet even the basic necessities of their growing populations. Considering that a 1 per cent growth in population requires at least a 2.5 per cent growth in gross national product, a minimum annual growth rate of 6 per cent in gross national product has to be assured just to maintain the status quo. The goal of providing minimum food security to all the people will require even faster growth. The increasing awareness that the impact of the mismanagement of our valuable renewable resources, such as forests, soil, water and environment is not localized, but has vital significance for the world community as a whole, is a consequence of the enormous developments that have taken place in the past decade. The importance of the eradication of large pockets of illiteracy to ensure that increased productivity is not achieved at the cost of global environment has become apparent only now. Collective tackling of these problems on an urgent basis with the widest possible participation for achieving sustainable and environment-friendly growth has become vital, not only for the equitable progress of developing nations but also for the very survival of the entire habitat for humans on this planet.

Recent International Space Year activities, deliberations in the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, proceedings of the Rio Conference and attempts to bring some order to the enactment of global strategies such as the Montreal protocol - all point out the world community's tremendous concern over solving these basic issues. The easing of global tension and the awareness of the need for forging increased international

(Mr. Rao, India)

cooperation have established a most favourable climate for taking new global initiatives. If this be so, is this not the right time for us to hold the third UNISPACE conference with the widest participation, in order to accelerate the exploitation of the most powerful space technology for achieving sustainable growth?

It is also pertinent to ask whether these aims cannot be achieved through the normal working process of our own Committee or through bilateral and multilateral arrangements. The answer to this question lies, in our view, in the question of whether, but for the UNISPACE 82 Conference, we would have reached the present state of international understanding. We have no doubt that the third UNISPACE conference is the only way to evolve widely acceptable and collectively implementable solutions to the complex issues. Such a conference will also renew and strengthen our own effort in this Committee and help us critically focus our attention to look for new initiatives and mechanisms for furthering purposeful international cooperation. The outcome of such a conference, as in the past, will act as a catalyst for bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms for achieving the common goal of sustainable global development.

While our Committee's membership does not include all countries, a global conference will bring the widest participation to strengthen our work in this Committee. We are of the firm opinion that a third UNISPACE conference is a necessity and will not in any way dilute the efforts of this Committee. On the contrary: we are confident that the outcome of the conference will provide the Committee with necessary input to enable it to adopt a time-bound, mission-oriented, common approach, thus revitalizing our Committee's work.

(Mr. Rao, India)

The leadership of countries advanced in the field of outer-space exploration and applications in promoting international cooperation has provided pathways for growth, helped our Committee make significant contributions to the international community and shaped the concept of outer space as a common heritage of mankind. It will be fitting and timely if their lead role is extended to establish firmly that vision of outer space through newer and greater initiatives for international cooperation.

Taking into account the above-mentioned aspects, we consider that the conference could have some specific goals and objectives, such as the following: to consolidate the gains of the activities initiated under International Space Year and other international programmes and consider a cooperative global approach in the use of space technology for the protection of the Earth's environment; to review and promote the level of space applications and their benefits to developing nations, particularly in the areas of education, communications and management of land and water resources for achieving integrated sustainable development; to identify, promote and initiate new international cooperative measures in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space, including at the bilateral and multilateral levels; and to consider new initiatives for establishing a firm basis for promoting peaceful uses of outer space.

In the discussion about the conference, we have heard voices of concern from many delegations on other aspects, such as its cost and timing, which clearly need to be addressed. We believe that, considering the immense benefits that will accrue to the world as a whole from such a conference, all Member States will extend their fullest support. Regarding the timing of the conference, we are optimistic that we can find a collective solution here,

(Mr. Rao, India)

consistent with the hopes of all Member States that the major problems that beset today's world will become problems of the past as we make the transition to the next century.

In the light of the background just given, I am happy to inform the Committee that the Government of India will be pleased to offer to host in India the third UNISPACE conference and will deem it a great privilege and honour if this proposal is accepted by the Committee and the United Nations.

Members of the Committee are aware that, starting with the unique sociological experiment called the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment, or SITE, conducted in cooperation with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Indian space programme has achieved considerable progress in realizing a wide spectrum of space benefits through the systematic development of indigenous capability in space technology. We hope that the example of a modest but vibrant Indian space programme and its visible impact on the national scene will serve as a fitting background for the conference's venue.

Members of the Committee may be aware that India has in the past successfully hosted many important international conferences, such as those of the International Astronautical Federation and the Committee on Space Research. We suggest the city of Bangalore as a possible venue for the next UNISPACE conference. Besides offering a salubrious climate most of the year, Bangalore is the nerve centre of the Indian space programme. This garden city, capital of the state of Karnataka, pulsates with rich traditions of art and culture which, combined with modernity, will no doubt offer visitors a memorable social and cultural experience.

(Mr. Rao, India)

In conclusion, we wish to emphasize the need to mount a concerted global effort to remove the inequities in the world and provide adequate food security on a sustainable basis for all future generations. As we approach the end of this eventful century, which has witnessed a dazzling expansion of the frontiers of scientific knowledge with breathtaking breakthroughs such as the birth of atomic energy, controlled release of nuclear forces, remarkable developments in electronics, significant achievements in biotechnology and spectacular advances in harnessing space technology for the common benefit of human beings, we still find a large part of the developing world struggling for mere existence. While we dream of the grand unification of a symmetrical universe, we have sadly failed to take a unified view of our own planet. It is in this context that we propose that the third UNISPACE conference be held with the specific mandate of devising new mechanisms and charting new courses for accelerating the utilization of the peaceful benefits of space technology in developing countries. We are particularly anxious that such a conference be held in a developing country to highlight and focus the relevance and importance of space technology for rapidly improving the quality of life in the developing nations.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. MEHTIYEV (Azerbaijan) (interpretation from Russian): Azerbaijan is participating for the first time in the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me the opportunity to speak at this meeting of the Committee.

The history of Azerbaijan's participation in the work on the peaceful uses of outer space is linked to the launching of the first artificial Earth satellites, when satellite-monitoring stations were built at the Astrophysical Observatory in Shemakha.

Further activities in these areas, in particular in the area of remote sensing, were made possible by the holding of the twenty-fourth Congress of the International Aeronautics Federation in 1973 in the capital of Azerbaijan, Baku. At that time, an organization was established that is now known as the Azerbaijan National Aerospace Agency, whose main area of work is developing methods and the necessary technological resources for data collection, processing, interpretation and dissemination for users of remote-sensing data.

I should like now to touch on three issues of interest to the delegation of Azerbaijan.

First, in his comprehensive and interesting report (A/AC.105/533), Mr. Abiodun paid special attention to the issue of regional cooperation as promoting greater cooperation not only between the industrially developed and developing countries but also among the developing countries themselves. We fully support that idea.

In my delegation's opinion, however, regional cooperation should not be limited to dissemination of information about the latest achievements in outer space or to the training of specialists in remote sensing - this sort of thing takes place in conferences and training seminars. Regional cooperation should also embrace the quest for long-term solutions to specific, practical problems

(Mr. Mehtiyev, Azerbaijan)

facing the States members of a geographical group. Some special kind of organizational decision may be required for this: for example, combining the States of a region into an agency along the lines of the European Space Agency. The initial tasks of such regional agencies would include agricultural, environmental and aerospace monitoring and geological, hydrological and other research on a permanent basis. Eventually, with appropriate assistance and participation by the developed countries, regional agencies could introduce modern technology and up-to-date production methods into their own countries.

Azerbaijan has already been participating in one such regional group, the Interstate Council on Outer Space, a voluntary association of former Republics of the Soviet Union. Given the members's varying levels of technology and development, each State participates in that area of the overall aerospace programme that is of direct interest to it.

We in Azerbaijan feel that it is useful for us to participate in that Council and that establishing a similar agency for the countries of Central Asia would promote the development of their economies.

Secondly, in 1977 and in 1980, in Baku, thanks to our wealth of experience in remote sensing, Azerbaijan hosted United Nations training seminars for the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Those seminars were highly commended, both by the official representatives of the United Nations who were responsible for carrying them out and by the participants themselves.

Recognizing the importance of instruction in remote sensing to countries that lack trained personnel, my delegation stands ready to host the next United Nations seminar on remote sensing applications in Baku in September or

(Mr. Mehtiyev, Azerbaijan)

October 1994. If our offer is approved, we shall be prepared to discuss all issues related to the holding of that seminar.

Thirdly, Azerbaijan would like to become a full-fledged member of COPUOS in order to make its own contribution to the international community's activities in this area of such great importance for humankind, and we would ask Committee members to support our request.

The CHAIRMAN: We have thus concluded our debate on agenda items 5 and 7.

Does anyone wish to speak on agenda item 6, "Report of the Legal Subcommittee"? It seems that at this stage the Committee's mood is rather reticent. As there are no names inscribed on the list for this afternoon's meeting, I am unfortunately obliged to cancel that meeting. Indeed, I do so with the greatest reluctance, because I am interested in making fullest use of conference facilities. I therefore urge representatives to use the remaining time, starting tomorrow morning, in an optimal manner in speaking under the respective open agenda items. I would ask them also to inscribe their names on the speakers' list and to be present in the conference room when I call on them.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.